

16 February 1979

MEMORANDUM

Soviet Policy Since The Fall Of Bakhtiar

With the fall of the Bakhtiar regime in Iran and the establishment of the Bazargan government backed by Khomeini, the Soviets are faced with a new set of problems and opportunities. They recognize that Khomeini is anti-communist, but they are pleased with his anti-Western orientation and are probably convinced that the unstable situation holds the promise of future developments even more to their advantage. At the moment, they appear to be concentrating on undermining the US position and preserving their own options to the extent possible. (U)

The Soviets moved quickly to recognize the new government and to herald the triumph of the "democratic revolution" in Iran. Their favorable coverage of Khomeini and the Bazargan government is reminiscent of their cautious line with respect to the Shah before his demise and is presumably designed to protect their economic and political assets in Iran. They appear to believe that Khomeini has the support of the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people and is the man they will have to deal with for the foreseeable future. (U)

At the same time, the Soviets are treating Khomeini's victory as the first stage in the course of the revolution in Iran. Comment has included statements that the next step will be to build a free and democratic society in Iran and that the coming to power of the Bazargan government has created "favorable preconditions for the free will of the Iranian people." On 11 February, a Leningrad lecturer stressed communist support for Khomeini at "this phase" of the revolution and compared the current phase to pre-revolutionary Russia and the abolition of serfdom. While this line could be intended to imply support for movement towards a post-Khomeini leftist government, it could also be described as supportive of the current government's policies. (C)

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Moscow is clearly hoping to see the groundwork laid for the strengthening of the Tudeh Communist Party within Iran. On 13 February TASS carried a Tudeh statement which stressed the need to guarantee the "complete freedom of all political organizations without any political or ideological discrimination" in Iran. As reported by AFP, the statement called for the lifting of the ban on Tudeh's formal existence and stated that the party was ready to "faithfully uphold all decisions taken" by the Bazargan government. Tudeh's 15 February call for oil workers to return to work suggests a current strategy aimed at gaining Tudeh's inclusion in the Khomeini-led coalition. This is supported by the call by the clandestine "National Voice of Iran" for the inclusion of all national and progressive groups in a national front led by Khomeini. (U)

The Soviet media continued to stress its anti-US theme. Among other things, commentary has charged that the US is considering using the safeguarding of evacuation as a justification for intervention in Iran and has indicated that the attack on the US embassy was carried out by former SAVAK agents hoping to create a pretext for new US military intervention in Iran. The latter may be intended to deflect the charges that leftist forces were involved in the attack. (U)

We have no evidence of Soviet contacts with the Peoples Sacrifice Guerrillas (the Chariks), the group reportedly responsible for the attack on the US embassy and a Charik leader has publicly indicated antipathy for the USSR. Nor is there any evidence of a Tudeh connection with this group. According to SAVAK reporting, Tudeh has not established links with either the Chariks or the Peoples Strugglers (Mujahedin), the terrorist group with links to Khomeini. This does not necessarily prove that such links do not exist.

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It is possible that the Chariks have received assistance from other elements which the Soviets in turn support. The

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There is no evidence of a connection between either the Soviets or the Tudeh Party and the new Marxist party called the Communist Party of Iran which was announced to the press on 6 February. The leader of this party has in fact denounced the Tudeh party, saying it is discredited because it is controlled by Moscow. Similarly, there is no evidence of Soviet involvement with any of the other sprouting leftist organizations, including the Maoist offshoot of the Tudeh Party (the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party) or the Socialist Workers Party of Iran, a Trotskyite-type organization. (C)

This lack of evidence does not constitute definite proof that the Soviets have had no contacts with some of these extreme leftist groups. But barring some evidence to the contrary, our tentative conclusion is that the Soviet vehicle for promoting leftist influence within Iran remains the Tudeh Party and that current Tudeh/Soviet policy is aimed at establishing the party's legitimacy and ability to maneuver. It seems unlikely that at this point the Soviets would risk incurring Khomeini's wrath by supporting any direct challenges to his authority. (C)

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
		22 Feb 79
TO: The Director		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
REMARKS:		
You asked to see this "Soviets in Iran" paper again.		
 IRR		
FROM:		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	EXTENSION

FORM NO. 241
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REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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